

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 00667 051544Z

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ACTION CU-03

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN INITIATIVE ON "FULBRIGHT" PROGRAM

REF: STATE 23824

1. EMBASSY PLEASED BUT SOMEWHAT BEMUSED THIS NEW SYRIAN INITIATIVE, BELIEVE BRIEF REVIEW EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE DISCUSSIONS OVER PAST 1 1/2 YEARS USEFUL AT THIS JUNCTURE.

2. VERY SHORTLY AFTER RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS, SYRIAN FONMIN OFFICIAL RAISED QUESTION OF CULTURAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN SYRIA AND US. DEPARTMENT AUTHORIZED EMBASSY ENTER DISCUSSIONS ON SUCH AN AGREEMENT WITH SARG, PROVIDING EXAMPLES OF AGREEMENTS USG HAS WITH OTHER MIDDLE EAST GOVERNMENTS. THERE FOLLOWED 1 1/2 YEARS OF WAFFLING WITHIN FONMIN, DURING WHICH WE WERE TOLD AT VARIOUS POINTS THAT A SYRIAN DRAFT WAS BEING PREPARED, THAT IT WAS IN CIRCULATION WITHIN FONMIN, THAT IT WAS "ON MINISTER'S DESK," THAT IT WAS "SOMEWHERE IN MIN EDUCATION." IN OTHER WORDS, THERE HAS THUS FAR BEEN NO PROGRESS BETWEEN EMBASSY AND SARG ON CONCLUDING A CULTURAL AGREEMENT.

3. FORMER SENATOR FULBRIGHT VISITED SYRIA JUNE, 1975, AND MET WITH LARGE NUMBER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 DAMASC 00667 051544Z

ACADEMICS. IN VARIOUS FORUMS SENATOR PUSHED IMPORTANCE

EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE AS NECESSARY KEY TO MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING REQUIRED FOR MOVE TOWARD PERMANENT PEACE IN MIDEAST. MESSAGE OBVIOUSLY STRUCK HOME, AT LEAST AMONG ACADEMICS, WHO HAVE CONTINUED TO MENTION SUBJECT UNOFFICIALLY TO EMBASSY OFFICERS.

4. EMBASSY OBVIOUSLY WELCOMES SYRIAN INITIATIVE AND BELIEVES IT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED. ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS OVER PAST MONTHS, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY SYRIAN OFFICIALS THAT CULTURAL AGREEMENT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM TO COOPERATE WITH US ON THIS-OR-THAT ASPECT OF OUR PROGRAM. RECOMMEND, THEREFORE, THAT DEPT IN ITS RESPONSE TO SYRIAN EMBASSY PLACE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM WITHIN CONTEXT OF GENERAL CULTURAL/EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM, IMPLEMENTATION OF WHICH WOULD BEST BE SERVED BY BLANKET CULTURAL AGREEMENT.

5. BROAD OUTLINES OF SUCH AN AGREEMENT RECENTLY WORKED OUT IN UK/SARG TALKS, COPY OF WHAT BEING POUCHED. UK AGREEMENT IS NON-SPECIFIC, UMBRELLA-TYPE ACCORD. OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH READS: QUOTE EACH CONTRACTING PARTY SHALL ENCOURAGE WITHIN THE LIMITS OF ITS CAPABILITIES; (A) THE AWARDED OF SCHOLARSHIPS OF LONG AND SHORT DURATION TO ADVANCED AND POST GRADUATE STUDENTS WHO ARE NATIONALS OF THE OTHER CONTRACTING PARTY; (B) THE EXCHANGE OF VISITS BY RESEARCH WORKERS, TEACHERS, AUTHORS, COMPOSERS, PAINTERS AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS TO TAKE PART IN COURSES, SEMINARS AND LECTURE SERIES, OR TO GIVE CONCERTS AND OTHER PERFORMANCES; (C) CONTACTS AND LINKS AT ALL LEVELS BETWEEN LIBRARIES, MUSEUMS RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS AND TEACHING INSTITUTIONS; (D) THE EXCHANGE OF BOOKS, PERIODICALS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS; FILMS, RECORDINGS AND OTHER MATERIALS FOR DISSEMINATION FOR NON-COMMERCIAL PURPOSES BY MEANS OF RADIO, CINEMA AND TELEVISION; INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR USE IN SCHOOLS, RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER TEACHING CENTRES; (E) CULTURAL EVENTS, INCLUDING ART EXHIBITIONS FROM THE OTHER COUNTRY. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 DAMASC 00667 051544Z

UNQUOTE. UK AGREEMENT DOES NOT MENTION ESTABLISHMENT OF CULTURAL CENTERS.

6. EMBASSY REQUESTS IT BE KEPT INFORMED OF DEPT EXCHANGES WITH SYRIAN EMBASSY ON THIS SUBJECT. MURPHY

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